



**Rhode Island Department of Human Services**

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December 20, 2021

Honorable Patricia A. Serpa, Chairwoman  
House Committee on Oversight  
101 State House  
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Chairwoman Serpa:

Please accept the attached report as the State's most recent update on the RIBridges system, which covers the reporting period November 16, 2021 – December 15, 2021. This document provides monthly updates on the following topics:

- System performance and improvement
- RI Department of Human Services (DHS) Employee Training
- Pending Applications
- SNAP Timeliness and Lobby/DHS Call Center Summaries
- CCAP Off-Cycle Payments
- LTSS Interim Payments
- Correspondence with Federal Partners (if any)

We appreciate your continued advocacy on behalf of those we serve, your interest in the health of the RIBridges system and the progress made to address outstanding issues. As always, please contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Celia J. Blue".

Celia J. Blue, Interim Director



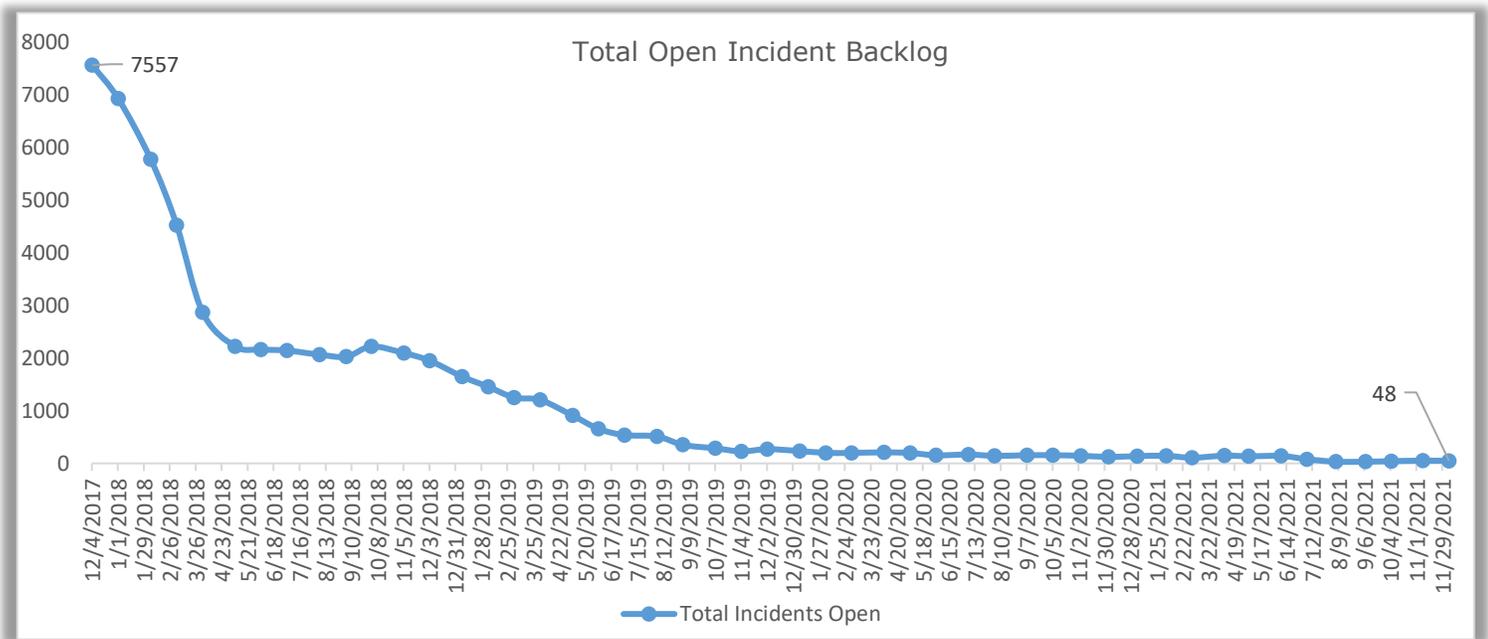
# RI Bridges: Monthly Update

## December 2021

Our team takes its charge seriously in promoting health, nurturing quality of life and being there for Rhode Islanders when needed. Our oversight of the work on the RI Bridges system is an important part of the equation. With system stabilization under our belt, we continue to focus on ensuring full compliance of the system. This report provides an update on our efforts and progress to date.

### SYSTEM PERFORMANCE + IMPROVEMENT

Due to a focused effort on consistent and stable system operations, the number of new and existing incidents (when the system does not operate as expected for a DHS customer, worker or provider) has **decreased by 99 percent** since December 2017. As of November 29, 2021, there were **48** open incidents.



### DHS STAFFING

DHS continues to make progress in hiring candidates for critical positions identified. Since November, DHS hired six employees. They are:

- 1 Clinical Training Specialist
- 2 Customer Service Aides
- 1 Implementation Aide in Central Scanning
- 1 Social Case Worker
- 1 Eligibility Technician I

## DHS TRAINING

### Training Overview

Training Topic	Training Date	# of Training Hours	# of New Staff	# of Current Staff
Multicultural Competency Training: Modules One, Two, Three and Four (Eight one-and-half hour sessions)	11-9-2021 11-10-2021 11-15-2021 11-16-2021 11-17-2021 11-23-2021 11-29-2021 11-30-2021	12	0	29
New Hire Orientation (Three full day sessions)	12-6-2021 12-7-2021 12-8-2021	13.5	3	0
Customer Relations Training Series (Two two-hour sessions)	11-30-2021 12-7-2021	4	0	10
Knowledge Transfer Four half-hour sessions and one full hour session)	11-16-2021 (2) 12-1-2021 12-3-2021 (2)	3	0	87
Fire Safety Training (One one-hour sessions)	11-9-2021 11-12-2021 11-16-2021 11-18-2021 11-23-2021	6	0	248
SNAP Office Hours (One one-hour session)	11-16-2021	1	0	4
Time Management Training Series (Two two-hour sessions)	12-3-2021 12-10-2021	4	0	21
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>399*</b> * current number of staff trained is a duplicate number
Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings (These trainings are self-directed)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DHS FTI, HIPAA, and Confidentiality 680 staff enrolled</li> <li>Telephonic Signature 31 staff enrolled</li> <li>Telephonic Signature -Elderly and Disabled Adults (EAD) 42 staff enrolled</li> <li>Asset Verification System (AVS) 102 staff enrolled</li> <li>Customer Portal (426)</li> <li>SNAP Reinvestment Updates (430 enrolled)</li> <li>Visit Record (428 enrolled)</li> <li>RIW Mini-Series Completed (49 enrolled)</li> </ul>		0	Combined total of <b>1,298*</b> staff trained on LMS: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>473 Completed FTI</li> <li>78 Completed AVS</li> <li>18 Completed Telephonic Signature</li> <li>21 Telephonic Signature EAD</li> <li>280 Completed Customer Portal</li> <li>182 Completed SNAP</li> </ul>

				Reinvestment Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 219 Completed Visit Record Training</li> <li>• RIW Mini-Series 27</li> </ul>
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*\* current number of staff trained is a duplicate number*

## Workshop Descriptions

**Multicultural Competency Training:** The Multicultural Competence Modules offer contextualized, scaffolded anti-oppression educational workshops for DHS employees. There are four foundational modules that introduce participants to frameworks, concepts, and strategies so DHS personnel are better equipped to advance its diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic goals individually and collectively. The workshops are offered virtually. Each session meets for 1.5-2 hours. The format for the sessions includes facilitated dialogue with individual and group activities.

### Module One: Advancing Anti-Oppression in the Workplace

This session presents and discusses the multicultural competencies that are necessary to advance anti-oppression in the workplace (e.g., awareness, understanding, knowledge, interaction and sensitivity). Objectives for this session include:

- Discussing select demographics of DHS' workforce data and implications for practice
- Articulating foundational concepts associated with anti-oppression and multi-cultural competence
- Outlining Washington State University Office of Outreach and Education's Cultural Competence Model
- Brainstorming the hallmarks of anti-oppressive, multiculturally competent DHS workforce and workplace

### Module Two: Understanding Social Identity, Power and Privilege

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of social identity, power and privilege. Special emphasis will be placed on social identity, power and privilege in human services settings. Objectives of this session include:

- Defining the concept of social identity
- Exploring the major forms of social identity in the U.S.
- Describing the three processes of social identity
- Describing the systems of power, privilege and oppression
- Identifying one's position on the social identity scale and discussing implications for practice

### Module Three: Disrupting Implicit Bias with Inclusive Behaviors in the Workplace

The purpose of this session is to introduce the concept of implicit bias. Special emphasis will be placed on implicit bias in human service settings. Objectives of this session include:

- Discussing the roots of bias
- Differentiating between explicit and implicit bias
- Presenting the common forms of implicit bias
- Identifying strategies to disrupt implicit bias using the multicultural change intervention matrix

### Module Four: Combating Microaggressions with Inclusive Language in the Workplace

Traditional notions of oppression hold that it is rare, occurring by a handful of rogue agents who intend to inflict harm on targets. However, it also occurs by well-meaning agents who convey unintentional, but no less harmful, "hostile, derogatory,

or negative slights and insults.” The effects of these indignities, coined microaggressions, are cumulative. The purpose of this interactive module will be to present and discuss the contours of microaggressions, offering examples of inclusive language to combat microaggressions as a target or a bystander. Objectives of this session include:

- Describing the origins of the term microaggressions (i.e., identity-based abuse)
- Differentiating between agents and targets of microaggressions
- Identifying the manifestations of microaggressions (e.g., intent vs impact)
- Delineating the three types of microaggressions
- Describing the consequences on targets
- Delineating select microaggression themes
- Outlining strategies for responding to microaggressions as a target or bystander

**New Hire Orientation:** The goal of the session is to provide new employees with all the pertinent information they need to begin working at DHS and to familiarize them with organizational policies and procedures. Additionally, the orientation introduces employees to the RIBridges system. New Hire Orientation goals include:

- Understanding DHS’ organizational hierarchy
- Learning about DHS’ mission and vision
- Gaining an understanding of DHS programs and services
- Reviewing and learning about policies and procedures regarding payroll, dress code and other practices
- Learning about the LEAN initiative
- Obtaining mandated training for Federal Tax Information (FTI), Civil Rights, Voter Registration and the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA)
- Getting staff accustomed to basic navigation and data collection in RIBridges through a hands-on approach

**Customer Relations Training:** This training provides information for DHS staff members on strategies to build their customer service skills.

- **Session One: Understanding Your Customer:** Every customer brings unique and standard expectations. In this session, the participants will begin to understand what internal and external customers expect. They will explore how change affects their customers and begin to explore the role empathy plays in every interaction.
- **Session Two: Communicating Effectively with Your Customer:** This session focuses on what it takes to communicate effectively with customers. Throughout the course, this session primarily focuses on serving customers by phone. Participants will learn about adult learning styles, perceptions and what happens to communication during stress.
- **Session Three:** This session pulls together all the key elements of the previous two sessions to understand what customers want and what they don’t want and how to deliver them effectively, especially over the phone. The participants will explore what it takes to demonstrate empathy, be responsive and communicate clearly with their customers. Finally, we brainstorm what it takes to go beyond the customer expectation, creating an enthusiastically satisfied experience.

**Rhode Island Learning Center Trainings:** These trainings are self-directed. Staff are enrolled through the Learning Management System (LMS).

- **FTI/HIPAA:** This is a required training for all DHS employees. This refresher training covered the federal regulations and internal procedures that staff need to follow in protecting customer information.
- **Telephonic Signature/Telephonic Signature – EAD:** To work new documents such as applications, recerts, interims (with a change) and employment plans over the phone, it is imperative that either a signed document is present in the case file OR the worker records a telephonic signature while the customer is on the phone.
- **Asset Verification Training System:** This training provides guidance to staff processing EAD and LTSS requests for Medicaid determinations at the time of application and renewals.
- **SNAP Reinvestment:** This course is designed as a refresher for operations staff on SNAP six-month interim processing. The intent of this course is to review best practices for interim processing.

- **Customer Portal:** A walk-through of the front and back ends of the customer portal.
- **Visit Record Refresher:** This course provides an overview of the Visit Record functionality in RIBridges. The purpose of the training is to increase knowledge on the Visit Record function in RIBridges that will be included in all field offices, which enhances consistency in our processes by appreciating the customer journey.

**Fire Safety Training:** General injury and fire safety educational reminders for a safer world. The Emergency Response Team (ERT) volunteer program assures an injury and fire safety team for a valued work force. Safety education combines our work and home life to help create a safer future for us all.

**Time Management Training Series:** Time management is more than just getting more done in the day. It is finishing the day feeling accomplished and being able to prioritize what is truly important. In this series, you'll explore the reality of time and the everyday obstacles of managing time all while assessing competing and shifting priorities. By the end of the program, you will have tools useful in your role to maximize your time, prioritize effectively and most importantly leave work feeling accomplished.

- **Session One: Understanding the Realities of Time:**  
There are only 24 hours in a day. This is the first reality. In this session, you'll explore the realities of how you spend your time and the realities of some habits that may be costing you more time than you realize. You'll also learn how much your brain can help you and hold you back from managing your time through an interactive activity.
- **Session Two: Handling Competing Priorities:**  
Days are filled with constant competing and shifting priorities, including interruptions. Each of these can pull you away from your true priorities. In this session, staff explore tools to help determine what work is most important, strategies and tactics to remain focused, and tools to handle interruptions.

**Knowledge Transfer Training:** The purpose of these sessions is to communicate the system updates/changes to the attendees. The learning goals include:

- Explaining new knowledge transfer processes for releases
- Reviewing each new/updated QRG, flash, etc. related to the upcoming release in the month of November
- Recognizing the end user impact of the system updates

**Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) Office Hours:** The SNAP office hours are led by a Clinical Training Specialist and the SNAP program staff member. This space is created for eligibility staff that process SNAP cases with the purpose of having them bring real case examples so that the trainer and program staff member can answer or walk through RIBridges and/or policy questions.

## PENDING NEW APPLICATIONS

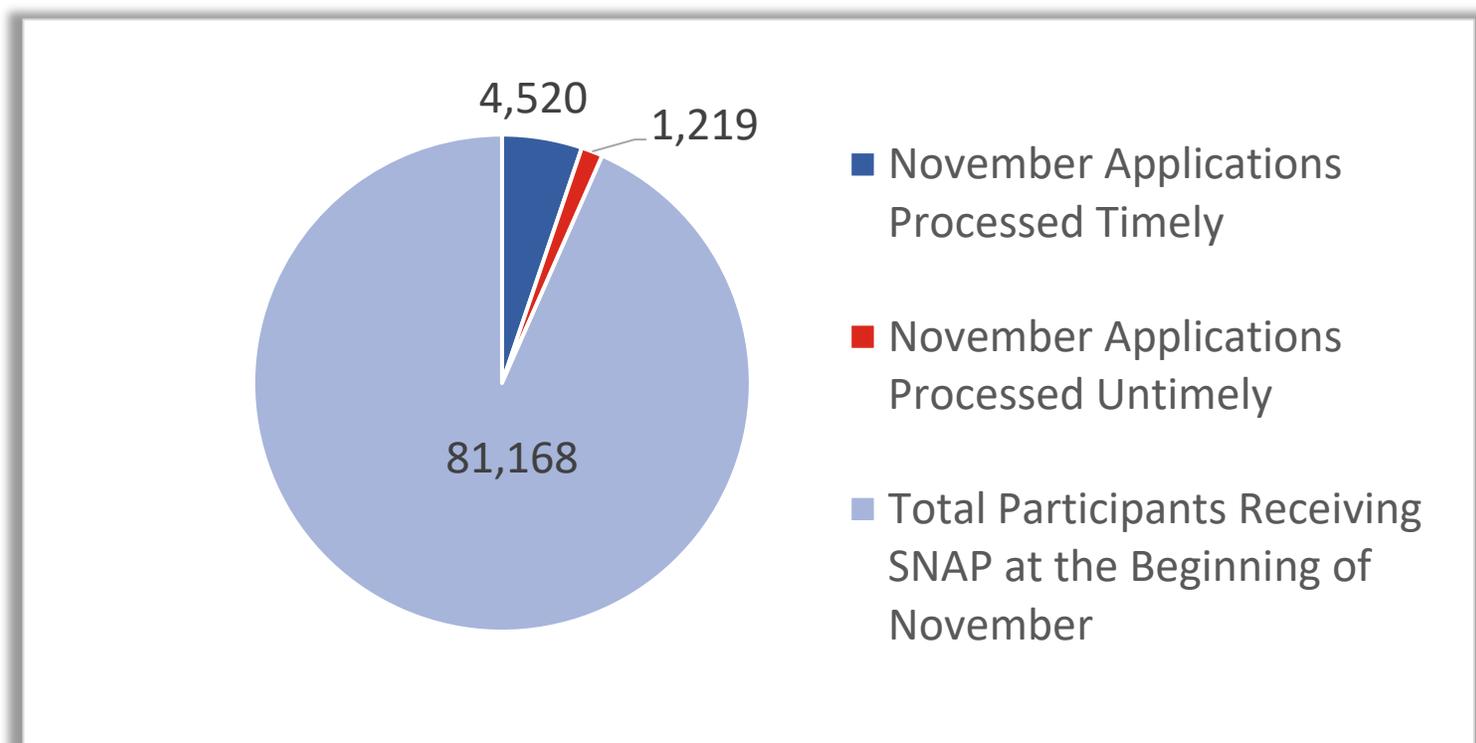
The State continues to prioritize access to benefits. As of **December 13, 2021**, the number of pending new applications across all programs was **4,294**. The total of overdue, pending applications awaiting State action was **1,817**.

	Not Overdue			Overdue			Total
	Client	State	Total	Client	State	Total	
<b>SNAP Expedited</b>	78	34	112	10	22	32	<b>144</b>
<b>SNAP</b>	504	328	832	117	87	204	<b>1,036</b>

Non-Expedited							
CCAP	27	164	191	3	24	27	218
GPA Burial	0	1	1	0	0	0	1
SSP	0	20	20	0	6	6	26
GPA	17	28	45	3	8	11	56
RIW	132	99	231	26	24	50	281
Undetermined Medical	30	227	257	75	1,136	1,211	1,468
Medicaid-MAGI	49	31	80	61	57	118	198
MPP	11	76	87	8	336	344	431
Complex Medicaid	10	41	51	17	86	103	154
LTSS	12	235	247	3	31	34	281
Totals	870	1,284	2,154	323	1,817	2,140	4,294

## SNAP TIMELINESS

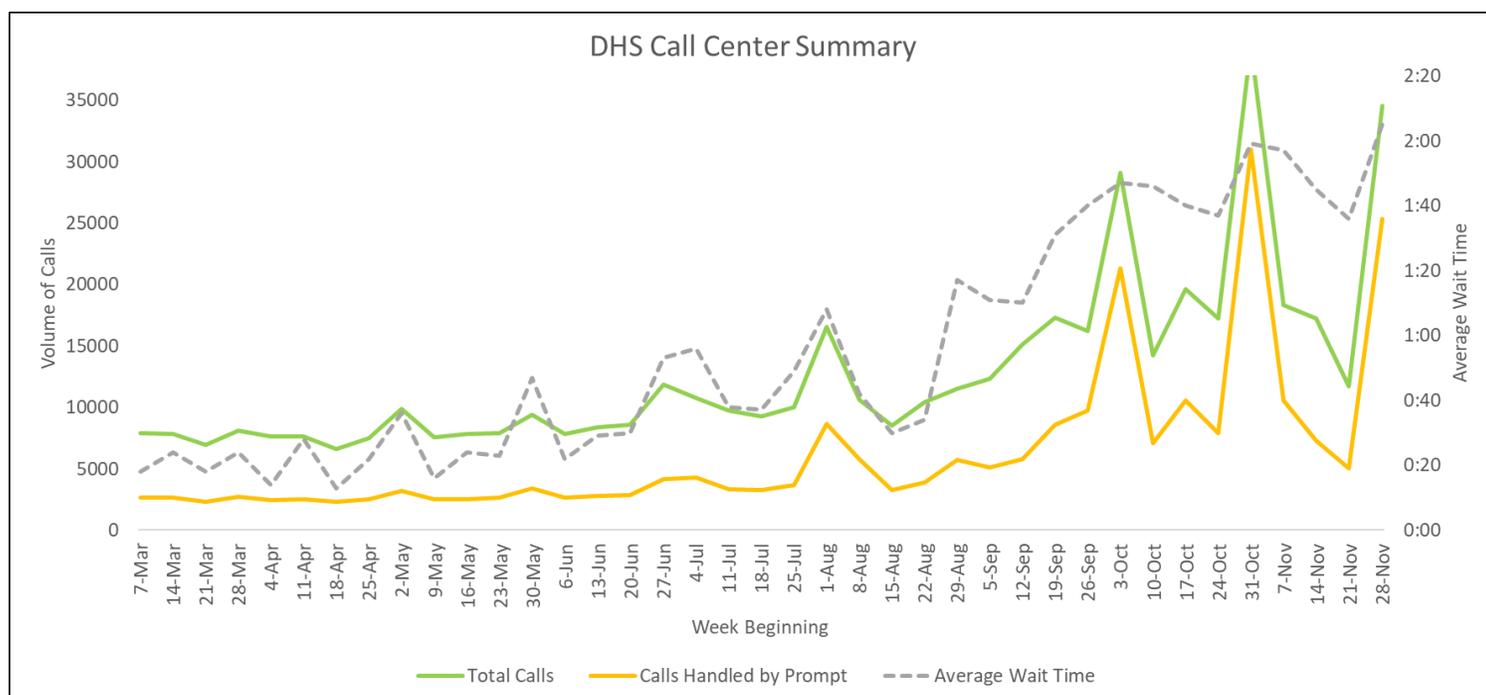
In November 2021, SNAP benefits were issued timely to **81,168** households. Despite the impact of COVID-19, **79** percent of new SNAP applications were timely processed. The number of applications not timely processed represents less than **1** percent of the SNAP population receiving benefits.



## CALL CENTER

For the five-week period of **October 31, 2021 through the week that started on November 28, 2021**, the average wait time to DHS staff was about **1 hour and 52 minutes**. DHS recognizes this average wait time is an issue, and with understanding the pressure points that are impacting this longer wait, we have implemented operational changes and we are in the process of

increasing Call Center staff to address this issue. The busiest week was the week beginning October 31st, and there were **39,475** calls then.



## CCAP OFF-CYCLE PAYMENTS

Below are the total number of batch payments made to child care providers between November 16, 2021 and December 15, 2021.

Batch	Date Issued	# of Providers	Amount after Union/PAC removed
11	11/4/2021	526	\$2,138,990.63
11A	11/5/2021	17	\$57,937.32
11B	11/12/2021	0	\$-
12	11/18/2021	521	\$2,277,758.60
12A	11/19/2021	22	\$23,434.82
12B	11/26/2021	0	\$-
13	12/2/2021	535	\$2,362,326.29
13A	12/3/2021	18	\$31,416.48
13B	12/10/2021	31	\$67,597.20

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (11, 11A, & 11B)	543	\$2,196,927.95
Off-cycle (11A & 11B)	17	\$57,937.53
Provider off-cycle/total	3.23%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	2.71%	-

	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (12, 12A & 12B)	543	\$2,301,193.42
Off-cycle (12A & 12B)	22	\$23,434.82
Provider off-cycle/total	4.22%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	1.03%	-
	Providers	Payments
Total Batch (13, 13A & 13B)	584	\$2,461,339.97
Off-cycle (13A & 13B)	49	\$99,013
Provider off-cycle/total	9.16%	-
Payments off-cycle/total	4.19%	-

## LTSS INTERIM PAYMENTS

We continue to make progress in reducing the LTSS backlog of applications. As of this submission, there are **31** overdue LTSS applications pending State action.

Through the contingency process, which ensures nursing and assisted living facilities receive prompt reimbursement from the State, Rhode Island has paid out approximately **\$200,000** in interim payments to facilities for the State Fiscal Year 2021. The fiscal year for 2022 began on July 1, 2021.

Our payment reconciliation process remains ongoing as we continue to meet with long term care facilities across the state. In total, the State has paid approximately **\$153 million**, and we have collected about **\$133 million** in reconciliation payments so far from nursing home facilities. This represents approximately 86 percent of the total amount of contingency payments made.

## UPDATE ON RECERTIFICATIONS PROCESS

The State has verified that Medicaid renewals were appropriately initiated by the RIBridges System in compliance with the CMS approved renewal plan.

## CORRESPONDENCE WITH FEDERAL PARTNERS

The Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) and the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) are important partners to the State. We continue to communicate regularly to review progress with the RIBridges system. There wasn't any communication during this reporting period.